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Class Rank

Imagine students starting the process of college applications. What does it entail? Usually in the long list of requirements for admission students need to include their GPA, their Junior year grades, and their class rank. Class rank is one of the most widely argued requirements on the college admission list. When high schools class rank, they take the mathematical summary of a student’s record and then compare that to the other students in the class. Class rank is often based off of the difficulty of the classes the student is taking, as well as, the grades earned in those courses. Those courses are then converted into the student’s GPA, which then reflects the student’s class rank.

When I was in the majority of college prep classes, with no weighted average, I noticed that my GPA and class rank was significantly lower than those who were in weighted classes. The mere fact that they were ranked higher due to course difficulty did not make sense to me due to my actual letter grade was as good or better than the students in weighted classes, yet still my rank was lower. As, I did better in lower courses I was moved into higher level courses and my GPA and class rank rose. But, even though I was able to advance, I still do not agree with the idea of class rank. I feel that if colleges base their acceptance on class rank, their acceptance would be tainted. Class rank alone is not a viable source to base intelligence off of. Separating students based off of sometimes unfairly weighted courses, which affect this figure that is supposed to prove the students capability, is unjust to those who are not offered possible advancement in course difficulty. Class rank is a form of segregating students. Because class rank has weighted classes intertwined, it allows the “privileged” students to come out on top, and the students who aren’t quite as fortunate to get into classes but are still getting proficient grades to be at a loss.

In high school alone, class rank determines who will be valedictorian and salutatorian. When entering the colligate level, students who have a higher class rank will in turn have a higher probability of college acceptance. Over the past couple of years, school boards have been debating whether or not to abolish class rank. Many school boards feel that the pressure to be in the top 10 percent of the class is too much for students to cope with. A principal from the Eden Prairie High School feels it necessary to eliminate class rank. He feels that class rank alone causes too much pressure and with the abolishment of it would allow the students to feel that they can take more rigorous classes without the pressure of failing out or falling out of that 10 percentage. The Miami-Dade County School board decided in early 2006 to discontinue ranking students. The principals thought it would lessen the competition in schools and force college admissions officials to look more intently at each applicant. They say that when class ranking is absent it initiates the college to look at the child more as a whole, rather than a number or percentage.

The counter-position would argue that class rank is a small measure that colleges look at. In some cases, they say that when colleges review applicants class rank is never one of the initial deciding factors; it is just something they look at as a final deciding factor. And with the growing trend of eliminating class rank, colleges are supposedly forced to recreate a class rank for the student or if that is not possible to make a more impulsive decision on who they accept and who they reject. Although they prove points, the presence of heavy academic competition weighs too heavily on students who excel in school and are just shy of that prestigious top 10 class percentage.

When looking at a macro-view of class rank, the pressure it puts on students to do well proves to be overwhelming for many students. High schools across the country are continuing the trend to eliminate class rank and the repercussions that come with it. Without the ranking students are free to try more prestigious classes and concentrate more on their GPA and letter grades rather than their status among their peers.